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The Catholic Historical Review

VOLUME III

OCTOBER, 1917

NUMBER 3

ORIGIN OF AMERICAN ABORIGINES: A FAMOUS CONTROVERSY

In the century and a half following the discovery of the New World by Columbus, the ships returning to Europe brought back tales of things hitherto unknown, of monsters of the deep and of ambiguous shapes of man and beast. It taxed the ingenuity of the Europeans to discover whence came that boundless multitude of beings, who were the natives of the New World, from what lands they had set forth, how they in their ignorance reached the New World, and what had changed them so much from their supposed origin. To have shown the origin of so many peoples was considered no less praiseworthy than to have discovered the lands themselves.¹ Attempts were made to connect the New World with Solomon's Ophir and Plato's Atlantis; some even made the claim that the Spaniards in their flight from the Moors had come to America, basing their arguments on the crosses found in Yucatan.² And while these attempts, on first sight, may seem crude and puerile, it must be remembered that even now the question of the origin of the Indians is a matter of conjecture.³

Many other queer theories were evolved to account for the inhabitants of the New World. Theophrastus Paracelsus, says Horn,⁴ exhausted all foolishness, when he asserted that two Adams had been created, one in Asia and one in America. Most of the theories, however, did not go back to Adam, but started

¹ HORN, *op. cit.*, p. 6. For Bibliography, see p. 275.

² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³ AD. F. BANDELIER, in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. i, p. 411, s. v. *America*.

⁴ HORN, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

from the Deluge or the Confusion of Tongues. There is scarcely a nation to which some share in the original peopling of America has not been attributed: Icelanders, Celts, Welsh, Norse, Spaniards, Romans, Jews, Chanaanites, Phoenicians and Carthaginians, Egyptians, Abyssinians, Polynesians, East Indians, Chinese, Tartars and Scythians—all have been put forward on one pretext or another as the ancestors of the Indian nations.

The most famous of the early discussions of the various theories was that of the Dominican, Gregorio Garcia, a missionary for twenty years in South America, who reviewed the question in his *Origen de los Indios del Nuevo Mundo*, published at Valencia in 1607. He reviews the supposed navigations of the Phoenicians, the identity of Peru with Solomon's Ophir, and the chances of African, Roman, and Jewish migrations, only to reject them all and to favor a coming of Tartars and Chinese.⁵ Edward Brerewood, in his *Enquiries touching the diversity of languages and religions*, published at London in 1632 and 1635, also claimed a Tartar origin, although he thought that certain groups of Indians in New England came originally from Iceland.⁶

A little over twenty-five years before, Marc Lescarbot, a French lawyer, sailed for Port Royal in Acadia, to satisfy his curiosity concerning the wonders of the New World, and, after spending a year with the Indians there, helping them in various ways, returned to France. Two years later (1609), he published a narrative of his voyage under the title *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France*, in which he gives a summary of all the French attempts at colonizing in America, notably Florida, Brazil and Acadia.⁷ In this work, Lescarbot claims that, when Joshua entered the land of Chanaan and took possession of it, the Chanaanites were so astonished that they lost courage and took to their ships, and were finally cast up by storms upon the American shores.⁸ He further contends that Noah had shown the way

⁵ WINSOR, Vol. i, p. 369. Tartars were understood to embrace all those barbarous tribes dwelling between the Caspian and Black Seas in the West and the Pacific Ocean and Behring Strait in the East, although Behring Strait had not been discovered at that time and it was not known whether Asia and America were connected or not.

⁶ DE LAET, *Notae*, pp. 122 et seq.; HORN, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁷ LINDSAY, in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. ix, p. 190, s. v. *Lescarbot*.

⁸ DE LAET, *Notae*, pp. 110-111; HORN, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

to America to some of his sons and had assigned to them as their abode, "those lands to the West, in which, perhaps, he had been born."⁹

In 1569, a Spanish Jesuit, José de Acosta, was sent by his provincial to South America. Here he remained for sixteen years, teaching and travelling, studying and making copious notes.¹⁰ In 1588, after having spent three years in Mexico, he returned to Spain and published his notes in Latin under the title *De Natura Novi Orbis*, and two years afterwards in Spanish under the title *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*.¹¹ In this work, Acosta paid attention particularly to a way whereby the Indians could have reached America. The gist of his opinion is that the Americans came from Asia, which region is either contiguous to America or separated from it by a very small strait. He proves this from the animals, because in no other way could they have entered America. Some men, he says, were cast upon American shores by storms and some came there by chance, but, that anyone through a preconceived plan had sailed to America, he denies absolutely.¹²

The chief literary controversy, however, over this question was that which took place between Hugo Grotius and Johan De Laet, two Dutchmen, the one born in Delft in 1583, the other in Antwerp about 1582,¹³ and if the fame of Grotius depended upon the results of this controversy, he would be almost entirely unknown today. Much has been written about Grotius, because of the fame he attained as an ambassador and international lawyer. It was he who gathered together the scattered members (*membra disiecta*) of the body of international law and united them in his epoch-making work: *De jure belli ac pacis*, published at Antwerp in 1625. Of De Laet, however, very little has been written, although his services to the early geography of America and to history can scarcely be over-estimated.

⁹ DE LAET, *Notae*, p. 117; HORN, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁰ AD. F. BANDELIER, in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. i, p. 108, s. v. *Acosta*.

¹¹ WINSOR, Vol. i, p. 262.

¹² HORN, *op. cit.*, p. 12; DE LAET, *Notae*, pp. 72 et seq.

¹³ So WINSOR, Vol. iv, p. 417, n. 2; HUBERT (p. 737) says 1593; and NICÉRON (p. 339) says "about the end of the sixteenth century."

A story¹⁴ is told of him that is very characteristic of the esteem which he enjoyed. He had deciphered the handwriting of Claude Saumaise for the printers, when they were publishing the latter's works. Saumaise had written so fast that his writing was extremely illegible and the printers had not been able to read it until they received De Laet's aid. Shortly after De Laet's death, when Saumaise was passing by the shop of the Elzeviers, Louis Elzevier, who was on the door-step, put his hand to his hat to salute Saumaise without the latter perceiving him. Whereupon the famous printer called out to Saumaise: "What's the matter there? Why don't you return the salute to your best friends?" Saumaise replied: "Ha, am I now in condition to give a salute to anyone? Don't you know that, in losing De Laet, I have lost my hand?"

Since almost nothing is known of De Laet's life except what he himself has accidentally set down in his own works, a slight digression may be pardoned here to consider these works. From these it is evident that he was a geographer, historian, philologist and naturalist of no little skill. In 1624, he was established at Leyden and for twenty-five years thereafter he was busy publishing and editing books for the Elzeviers. As director of the Dutch West India Company, he had, of course, ready access to its records, while as co-patroon of Rensselaerswyck he had an especial interest in the country where his daughter, Johanna, and his son-in-law had made their home.¹⁵ Therefore to popularize the knowledge of foreign lands connected with that company, he wrote his *Nieuwe Wereldt*,¹⁶ which is an excellent compilation made from the works of a great number of foreign geographers and navigators. This was issued from the Elzevier Press at Leyden in 1625. Five years later there appeared a second revised

¹⁴ NICÉRON, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

¹⁵ WINSOR, Vol. iv, p. 417, which contains a facsimile of De Laet's signature; cf. also *Collections of the New York Historical Society*, second series, Vol. i, p. 285.

¹⁶ For complete title, see WINSOR, Vol. iv, p. 417, n. 4; *Collections of the New York Historical Society*, second series, Vol. i (New York, 1841), p. 284; and BRUNET, Vol. iii, col. 741. See also HUBERT, FOPPENS, and NICÉRON. There is a copy in the Library of Congress. A translation of extracts from the Dutch edition and of the additions in the Latin and French editions concerning New Netherlands has been published in the *Collections of the New York Historical Society*, second series, Vol. i (New York, 1841), pp. 281-316, and Vol. ii (New York, 1849), part ii, pp. 372-373.

and enlarged edition, which contained several new maps. Among these was a map of *Nova Anglia, Novum Belgium et Virginia*, in which are to be found such names as *Patawomecque* (Potomac) and *Sasquesahanough* (Susquehanna),¹⁷ and in which De Laet for the first time, placed Lake Champlain with fair accuracy and gave to Cape Cod a shape more nearly its own.¹⁸ It is interesting to note that this work also contained a map of the Orinoco River and the *Laguna Parima* with its city, Manoa, or El Dorado.¹⁹ De Laet's intention to give to his fellow-citizens as perfect a description of the New World as circumstances would allow, was carefully carried out, so that a Latin translation²⁰ and a French translation²¹ followed within the next ten years. This was followed later by a history or yearly account of the proceedings of the Dutch West India Company from its beginning to 1636.²²

Meanwhile, the Elzeviers were busily engaged in publishing a series of historical monographs on the countries of Europe and Asia, which, because of their appearance in extremely small form, were called the "Little Elzevirian Commonwealths." In the publication of these volumes, De Laet played no small part, so that Struve,²³ writing about a century later, says that De Laet's must be considered the best of all that had appeared.

¹⁷ WINSOR, Vol. iii, p. 125, which contains a facsimile of this map.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 381-382.

¹⁹ WINSOR, Vol. ii, p. 587; the following page contains a facsimile of this map.

²⁰ For complete title, see WINSOR, Vol. iv, p. 417, n. 4; and BRUNET, Vol. iii, col. 741, and Supplement, Vol. i, col. 742. See also HUBERT, FOPPENS, NICÉRON, and the *Nouvelle Biographie*. There is a copy in the Library of Congress. "In preparing the Latin edition of the 'New World' De Laet recomposed the work anew, condensing many chapters, interweaving new materials collected in the interval." (*Collections of the New York Historical Society, op. cit.*, p. 287.)

²¹ For complete title, see WINSOR, Vol. iv, p. 417, n. 4; and BRUNET, Vol. iii, col. 741, and Supplement, Vol. i, col. 742. See also HUBERT, FOPPENS, NICÉRON, and the *Nouvelle Biographie*. There is a copy in the Library of Congress. The French translation was made from the Latin edition (*Collections of the New York Historical Society, op. cit.*, p. 287). A translation into Spanish of that part of the "New World" which concerns Porto Rico was made by Segundo Ruiz Bélvis and published in *Biblioteca Histórica de Puerto-Rico, que contiene varios documentos de los siglos XV, XVI, XVII y XVIII, coordinados y anotados por D. ALEJANDRO TAPIA Y RIVERA* (Puerto-Rico, 1854).

²² For complete title, see WINSOR, Vol. iv, p. 417, n. 5; *Bibliotheca Hulthemiana*, Vol. iv, p. 192; and BRUNET, Vol. iii, col. 741.

²³ STRUVE, p. 854; cf. also NICÉRON, p. 343.

The first of these was that on England, which was issued in 1625.²⁴ Almost half of this work was taken up by a Latin translation (not De Laet's²⁵) of Sir Thomas Smith's *De Republica Anglorum*.²⁶ Three years later the volume on Italy²⁷ appeared. The editing of this volume had been entrusted to Thomas Segeth and he had already finished a translation of an anonymous Italian work on the princes of Italy, when his death in the latter part of 1627 forced the Elzeviers to fall back upon De Laet, who is responsible for the rest of the work.

In 1629, the volumes on Spain²⁸ and France²⁹ were published,

²⁴ *Thomae Smithi Angli De Republica Anglorum Libri tres. Quibus accesserunt Chorographica illius descriptio aliique politici tractatus. Editio ultima prioribus multo auctior* (Lug. Batavor., Ex officina Elzeviriana, 1641). There is a copy of this in the Library of Congress. As the title indicates, this edition is more complete than that of 1625 or that of 1630. See also NICÉRON, pp. 342-343; and the *Nouvelle Biographie*.

²⁵ (ALSTON's edition of SMITH's *De Republica Anglorum*, p. 146). "The Latin of De Laet's edition is a mere reproduction of John Budden's translation (1610?) without acknowledgment."

²⁶ Smith wrote it in English in 1565 (cf. ALSTON's edition, p. xiv) and it was published six years after his death under the title: *De Republica Anglorum. The maner of gouvernement or policie of the Realme of Englande*. [London, 1583.] There is a copy in the Library of Congress. The Latin translation used by De Laet was made from one of the many editions which followed and contained additional matter, chiefly two chapters in the third book, which it has been supposed that Smith never wrote. See preceding note.

²⁷ *De Principatibus Italiae, Tractatus Vary* (Lugd. Bat., Ex officina Elzeviriana, 1628). This contains [1] *Incerti Auctoris De Principibus Italiae Commentarius, ex Italico in Latinum versus a Thoma Segetho* and [2] *Tractatus de Territoriis, Potentia, Familiis, Foederibus Principum, Rerumpublicarum, et eorum qui hodie in Italia rerum potiuntur: e variis et probatissimis authoribus magna cura et labore collectus*, which is the work of De Laet. There is a copy in the Library of Congress. See also NICÉRON and the *Nouvelle Biographie*.

²⁸ *Hispania, sive de Regis Hispaniae regnis et opibus commentarius* (Lugd. Bat., Elzevir., 1629). There were two editions of this in the same year, the second of which contains considerable additions (see NICÉRON, p. 341; and *Bibliotheca Hulthemiana*, vol. iii, p. 207). NICÉRON says: "There are many faults in this little work, but they ought to be less attributed to De Laet than to the authors whom he copied." See also STRUVE, p. 858; the *Nouvelle Biographie*; and FOPPENS.

²⁹ *Gallia, sive de Francorum Regis Dominiis et Opibus Commentarius* (Lugduni Batavorum, Ex officina Elzeviriana, 1629). There is a copy in the Library of Congress. The preface states that this is different from that work which appeared from the same press under the title: *Respublica sive Status Regni Galliae, diversorum authorum*. See also STRUVE, pp. 857-858; NICÉRON; FOPPENS; and the *Nouvelle Biographie*.

and a year later, that on the Belgian Confederation.³⁰ The latter which may be of interest now, in view of the present war, treats of the following provinces of the present Netherlands and Belgium: Geldria (Gelderland), Hollandia, Zelandia (Zeeland), Traiectensis Diocesis (Utrecht), Frisia (Friesland), Transisalanian (Oberyssel), Groninga et Umlandia (Groningen and Drenthe), Brabantiae Pars, and Flandriae Pars. Under each of the first seven of these headings, De Laet describes the geographical situation and boundaries; climate and soil; customs, characteristics and language of inhabitants; chief cities and towns; civil government of the entire province and of individual cities; trials and tribunals; and laws.

In the following year came the volume on the Empire of the Grand Mogul or *True India*,³¹ that is, not the one discovered by Columbus. It is dedicated to "Daniel Heinsius, Knight of Saint Mark; Counsellor and Historiographer of the most Serene Gustavus Adolphus, King of the Swedes, Goths, and Vandals; Professor of Civil Government, Librarian and Secretary in the very celebrated Academy of Leyden." This work contains ten chapters, the nature of which may be judged from the following subjects: topographic description; climate and soil; nature, customs, institutions and superstitions of natives; political and civil government; money, weights and measures; wealth of the Grand Mogul; his military forces; kings of India; and history of India.

Besides being responsible for other volumes of the "Elzevirian

³⁰ *Belgii Confoederati Respublica: seu Gelriae, Holland., Zeland., Traject., Fris., Transisal. Groning. chorographica politicae descriptio* (Lugduni Batavorum, Ex officina Elzeviriana, 1630). There is a copy in the Library of Congress. NICÉRON says that there were three editions in the same year, the second and third being alike, but containing more than the first (cf. the *Nouvelle Biographie*). See also FOPPENS; and *Bibliotheca Hulthemiana*, Vol. iv, pp. 460-461.

³¹ *De Imperio Magni Mogolis sive India Vera Commentarius, e variis auctoribus congestus*. (Lugduni Batavorum, Ex officina Elzeviriana, 1631). There is a copy in the Library of Congress bound together with GROTIUS' *De Mari Libero* and MARULA'S *De Maribus* (Elzevier, 1633). There were two editions in the same year, equally good, neither containing more than the other (see NICÉRON, p. 342; and the *Nouvelle Biographie*). See also FOPPENS.

Commonwealths," namely, those on Persia,³² on Portugal,³³ on Poland, Lithuania, Prussia and Livonia,³⁴ and on Turkey,³⁵ De Laet also published notable works along other lines. In 1635, he edited the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder.³⁶ Twelve years later, he published a book *On Gems and Precious Stones*, to which was prefixed the work of Theophrastus on the same subject.³⁷ In the following year, De Laet gathered together and put in order the notes of the celebrated naturalist, Margraff, who died on his return from a voyage of exploration to Brazil.³⁸ The last work published by De Laet was an edition of Vitruvius on architecture together with the works of several minor writers

³² *Persia, sive Regni Persici Status variaeque itinera excerpta* (Lugduni Batavorum Elzevier, 1633 and 1637). The second edition has one more chapter than the first, and article 8 of part 1, which in the first edition was at the end, is put in its place in the second edition (see NICÉRON, p. 342; and the *Nouvelle Biographie*). NICÉRON (p. 343) says: "That of Persia is particularly esteemed, being an extract of many curious voyages, made with taste and choice." See also FOPPENS.

³³ *Portugallia sive De Regis Portugalliae Regnis et Opibus Commentarius* (Lugduni Batavorum, Ex Officina Elzeviriana, 1641). There is a copy in the Library of Congress. There is nothing in the work itself to indicate its authorship, but STRUVE (p. 859), NICÉRON, FOPPENS, and the *Nouvelle Biographie* agree in attributing it to De Laet. A second edition appeared in 1644, (see NICÉRON and the *Nouvelle Biographie*).

³⁴ *Respublica Poloniae, Lithuanae, Prussiae et Livoniae* (Amst., 1642). This work is listed only by FOPPENS.

³⁵ *Turcici Imperii Status seu discursus varii de Rebus Turcarum*. This work is listed only by FOPPENS and no place or date of publication is given.

³⁶ *Plinii Historia Naturalis* (Lugduni Batavorum, Elzevier, 1635). 3 vols. This work is listed in NICÉRON, HUBERT, and the *Nouvelle Biographie*.

³⁷ *Ioannis de Laet Antverpiani De Gemmis et Lapidibus Libri Duo; quibus praemittitur Theophrasti Liber De Lapidibus Graece et Latine cum Brevibus Annotationibus* (Lugduni Batavorum, Ex officina Ioannis Maire, 1647). There is a copy in the Library of Congress, bound together with *Gemmarum et Lapidum Historia, quam olim edidit Anselmus Boetius de Boot* (Lugduni Batavorum, Maire, 1647), which occupies the first half of the volume. The pages of Theophrastus's work are unnumbered; De Laet's work begins on page 1 and is dedicated to "Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Frederick, King of Bohemia, Count Palatine, Elector of the Holy Roman Empire; the most excellent gem of her sex." De Laet may have been the editor of the third edition of De Boot's work mentioned above. See BRUNET, Vol. i, col. 1108, s. v. *Boot*; NICÉRON; FOPPENS; and the *Nouvelle Biographie*.

³⁸ *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae, in qua Guil. Pisonis de Medicina Brasiliensi Libri IV et Georgii Maregravii Historiae Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae Libri VIII, cum annotationibus Joannis de Laet* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1648). See BRUNET, Vol. iv, col. 677, s. v. *Pison*; HUBERT; NICÉRON; and the *Nouvelle Biographie*.

on the same subject.³⁹ This was published in 1649, the year in which De Laet died. In all these works De Laet proves his vast and profound knowledge, but he was rather a popularizer than a savant.⁴⁰

But to return to the controversy on the origin of the Indians: it was while Grotius was at Paris as the Ambassador from Sweden that he published his *De Origine Gentium Americanarum*,⁴¹ a brochure of fifteen pages. In this work, Grotius says by way of preface that he had often wondered that none of the many learned men of his time had made a careful investigation into the origin of those peoples who, before the advent of the Spaniards, inhabited those lands which some called America, others West India. No one, he claims, had done for the Indians of the New World what Sallust had done for the ancient Africans, Tacitus for the ancient Britons, and Strabo for many other ancient peoples. "Since," he continues, "I have read some works of Spaniards, Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Dutchmen, who have been there, I thought I would be doing no useless thing, if I communicated to those living and to come the more probable opinions on the subject, with a view that those who, through their travels or perusal of books I have not seen, have a greater knowledge of those matters, might confirm my opinions or, for good reasons, reject them."

³⁹ *M. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura Libri X cum notis; praemittuntur Elementa Architecturae collecta ab Henr. Wottono; accedunt Lexicon Vitruvianum Bern. Baldi Urbinatis et ejusdem Scamilli impares Vitruviani; De Pictura Libri III Leon. Bapt. de Albertis; De Sculptura excerpta ex Pomponio Gaurico; Lud. Demontiosii Commentarius de Sculptura et Pictura; omnia collecta a Jo. de Laet* (Amst., Elzevier, 1649). This is the title, as given by FOPPENS; NICÉRON gives a slightly different wording. See also HUBERT; and the *Nouvelle Biographie*.

⁴⁰ HUBERT, p. 737.

⁴¹ *Hugonis Grotii de Origine Gentium Americanarum Dissertatio* (n. p., 1642). There is a copy in the Library of Congress. De Laet republished it, when he published his reply (*Notae*). For other editions, see next two notes. It must have been written at least eight months before published (see below, p. 270). There is an English translation in the *Bibliotheca Curiosa* entitled: *On the Origin of the Native Races of America, A Dissertation by Hugo Grotius. To which is added A Treatise on Foreign Languages and Unknown Islands. By Peter Albinus. Translated from the original Latin, and enriched with Biographical Notes and Illustrations by Edmund Goldsmid* (Edinburgh, 1884). There are only 350 copies of this translation, one of which is in the Library of Congress. "The translation is unfortunate in its blunders" (WINSOR, Vol. i, p. 369, n. 1).

Grotius held that the Americans were not a very ancient race and had come to America chiefly from Europe. He argued that all North America, except Yucatan (which had an Ethiopian stock), was peopled from the Scandinavian North; that the Peruvians were from China, and that the Moluccans peopled the regions below Peru. He deprecated the attempts of those who, like Acosta, claimed a Scythian origin, and concluded by saying: "These are the opinions I was able to gather together concerning the origin of the American peoples, partly from tradition, partly from conjecture; and if anyone has more certain opinions than these, I shall enjoy the gain of an exchange of views, and for that gain shall give him thanks."

That the question discussed in this work of Grotius was of overwhelming interest is attested by the fact that three editions of the pamphlet appeared in the same year,⁴² as well as by the number of replies and counter-replies which it evoked. The new race with which the Dutch had come in contact through the operations of the Dutch West India Company, had sufficiently excited the interest of Johan De Laet, a director of that company, to induce him to study their habits and speculate upon their origin, so that when Grotius published his treatise on the subject, De Laet was quick to enter into the field to combat Grotius' theories.

In a dissertation⁴³ published at Amsterdam in 1643, De Laet chides Grotius for saying in his introductory paragraph that no

⁴² "Sabin mentions three editions of this year: Amst., Paris, and the above edition," says the Library of Congress card for the copy mentioned in preceding note.

⁴³ There is a copy of this work in the library of Rev. Dr. H. Hyvernât at the Catholic University of America (see title below, in Bibliography). The same volume also contains De Laet's second dissertation (see title below, in Bibliography). The Library of Congress has a copy like this and also another like this with the exception of the first title page, which differs only in the style of type used. The *Bibliotheca Hulthemiana* (Vol. iii, p. 390) gives the title as: *H. Grotii Dissert. Duæ de Origine Gentium Americanarum, cum notis et observ. J. de Laet.* The Library of Congress also has a copy of this first dissertation of De Laet bound separately, in which two folios (4pp.) follow the title-page and precede p. 3, containing a letter from Nicolaus Herouart, which belongs in a work of Robert Comte on the same subject (see below, note 52). See also BRUNET, Supplement, Vol. i, col. 743; the *Bibliotheca Hulthemiana*, Vol. v, p. 50; HUBERT; NICÉRON; FOPPENS; WINSOR, Vol. i, p. 370; and the *Nouvelle Biographie*.

one had made a careful investigation of the subject, and shortly thereafter contradicts himself by mentioning some who claimed that the aborigines came from Scythia. With regard to the latter opinion, De Laet says that Grotius has misstated the argument.

For two questions must be considered here: "Who could have come to the New World?" and "How could they have come?" Both questions must have a satisfactory answer, if the puzzle is to be solved correctly. Those who hold that the Indians came from Scythia or Great Tartary do not necessarily mean that they were Scythians or of Scythian origin, for they may mean peoples dispossessed and driven out by the Scythians, of which kind of transmigration history furnishes us with many examples. Consequently, the arguments which Grotius bases upon this hypothesis, arguments which are drawn from the genius and customs of the Scythian people, do not refute the opinion intended.

But, granting Grotius' supposition for the sake of argument, he went too far in basing his claim against the Scythian origin on the statement that there were no horses in America before the arrival of the Spaniards, although Scythia was always full of horses and the Scythians used them even to the extent of sometimes using their blood as drink. The fact that Scythia was then full of horses does not prove that such was always the case or that such was the case when the supposed transmigration occurred, which must have happened many centuries ago, because the vast multitudes of men in America differ so much in their geniuses, languages, customs, and morals, and the propagation of such vast numbers must have taken many centuries. Consequently, the inference is easy that that transmigration took place long ago, and immediately after the dispersion in Asia, on account of the confusion of tongues.

In this way, De Laet takes up each point in Grotius' argument and comments upon it, until he comes to Grotius' conclusion. To this he replies:

From what I have said I think it is sufficiently clear that the illustrious man did not make good use of tradition or conjecture in explaining the origin of the American peoples, and, moreover, that others have made more probable statements. This only shall I add in place of an epilogue, that he is to be praised for his attempt and to be thanked for having been willing to disclose his opinion on a question of such difficulty.

For my part, I am of the opinion that, since America is as extensive as our own world and was not less densely inhabited than Europe or Asia or Africa, it is altogether to be believed that it did not begin to be inhabited first 500 or 1,000 years ago, but that, immediately after the confusion of tongues and the consequent dispersion of families, there

was a migration even to America. For I see no other ways whereby a suitable account can be rendered for such a great multitude of inhabitants everywhere in America and the almost infinite number of different languages, which differ *toto caelo* from themselves and from European languages.

And yet I think it undeniable that new strangers came also in subsequent centuries, whether they came to this part or that part by chance or by intention. I cannot make myself believe that this happened after the reception of the Faith of Christ, because not even the slightest vestiges of Christianity have been found anywhere in these places. Now, no example can be found, I think, of any nation or people, after accepting properly the Christian mysteries, having thereafter obliterated them to such an extent that no vestige remains. That some provinces or regions, which contained Christians once, have none now, is due to the fact that the inhabitants have changed their abode, or have been altogether wiped out by newcomers.

In the next place, I think we ought especially consider the ways by which the aborigines could have come to America; for they came either by land or sea. That they could not have come by sea in those first ages or for a long time after is proved by the lack of knowledge of navigation in those centuries. Wherefore, we must believe that they came especially by land, and investigate the separation between Asia and America, whether there is any or how little it is, and likewise the relationship of South America to New Guinea. For in other parts, the two oceans make too vast a separation. For this purpose attention must be given to the statements of historians, since they treat of the migrations of peoples, whether voluntary or forced. Here, I think, the least credence should be given to conjectures, unless to those which are extremely probable.

With reference to Grotius' concluding sentence, De Laet says:

But, although I cannot yet merit thanks from the illustrious man on account of more certain opinions, yet I hope he will not be ungrateful, because I have shown that what he had persuaded himself was certain is partly uncertain, partly false, and because I could not allow him to be deceived any longer. But in order to be able to merit greater thanks, I shall add an examination of other opinions and a few observations, which might be able to lead to a fuller solution of this most difficult question.

Then follow the opinions of José de Acosta, Marc Lescarbot, and Edward Brerewood, with comments thereon, and twelve observations, which De Laet thought it would be worth while to add. In these, he considers anything that he thinks might throw light on a question "still so obscure and difficult." Pliny, the Azores, and the Canaries; Wales, Ireland, the Orcades, with

David Powell's story of Madoc; the characteristics and customs of the Scythians and the Polynesians; de Moraës' argument about the Carthaginians and the Jews—all come in for some consideration. Moreover, De Laet discusses the language, religion, form of government, physical characteristics, marriage and family relations, mode of living and dwellings, and method of reckoning time of the Indians in every known section of North and South America. An interesting point in this connection is his comparison of the Irish, French, Icelandic, Huron, Iroquois and Mexican languages.

De Laet's contention, therefore, was briefly this: the Scythian race furnished the predominant population of America; the Spaniards went to the Canaries and thence some of their vessels drifted to Brazil; the story of Madoc's Welshmen is probably true; it is not unlikely that the Polynesians may have floated to the western coast of South America; and minor migrations may have come from other lands.

The opposition of De Laet brought forth a second dissertation⁴⁴ from Grotius, who wrote in a very bitter vein. Since De Laet wore a beard like the Capuchins, perhaps to affect greater authority,⁴⁵ Grotius writes his reply "against an envious detractor, whom a shadowy beard makes good."⁴⁶ Grotius thought that De Laet did not write very elegant Latin and laughed at him in the following epigram,⁴⁷ which would lose its point if translated:

Latius haud Latius satis est: nec scribere cessat
Latius; ut sileat Latius, est satius.

A large part of this second dissertation of Grotius is taken up with bitter invective. He calls De Laet by way of reproach *obtrectator*, *presbyter*, and *exercitor* and says that "he is of such a character that whatever he himself has not read or does not wish to believe, he says is false," and that "everything he has written

⁴⁴ *De Origine Gentium Americanarum Dissertatio Altera adversus obtrectatorem, opaca quem bonum facit barba* (Paris, 1643). This is the title given by NICÉRON, p. 344 (cf. FOPPENS, p. 672). De Laet republished it, when he published his reply (*Responsio*).

⁴⁵ FOPPENS, p. 672.

⁴⁶ See title in n. 44, above.

⁴⁷ FOPPENS, p. 672.

against me, he has written with a desire, not for truth, but for detraction." Near the end of his treatise, Grotius repeats the assertion made in his first treatise to the effect that he would be grateful, if anyone would put forward more certain opinions. "But let him do it," he continues, "as good men should, not after the manner of vilifying controversialists."

Of course, this called for a defence from De Laet, which made a prompt appearance in 1644.⁴⁸ After answering Grotius' strictures point for point, De Laet finally comes to the sentence just quoted, in which his good faith is impugned. This causes him to burst forth in righteous, yet mildly expressed, indignation and incidentally adds a new and personal touch to the controversy. Therefore, it may be pardonable to quote De Laet's words:

I have not acted otherwise than good men should. I have shown with many reasons that your opinions were not probable. But you received them so angrily, so contumeliously, that, although I had hoped you would be grateful to me, you censured me in unworthy ways and abused me on nearly every single page—which is not acting as good men should. And that all may know that I have done nothing as a vilifier or detractor, I shall disclose here what moved me to publish my *Notae*.

About eight months before you published your first dissertation, it was handed to me without the name of its author by a relative, who said he had been requested to give it to me to read and consider, yet he did not tell me then from whom he had received it or whose it was. I gave it a cursory reading, and, when I noticed that there was much in it which either was not true or was not sufficiently proved, I briefly noted it down, and handed it back, together with the books of Acosta in Spanish and a Mexican vocabulary, thinking that the treatise was the work of an author living in Holland or perhaps at The Hague, whence my relative had received it from your brother. A little while after, I learned that it was the child of your brain, and that my relative had received it from your brother.

Now when that dissertation was published under your name and had arrived here, I promptly seized upon it, eager to know whether you had given any account of my observations. But seeing that nothing had been altered by you, as far as I could remember (for I had not kept a copy of my observations), I did not think you would receive it in evil part,

⁴⁸ See title below, in Bibliography, and note 43. The Library of Congress has a copy of this second dissertation of De Laet bound separately. FOPPENS (p. 672) says a second edition appeared in 1646. See also BRUNET, Supplement, Vol. i, col. 743; NICÉRON; WINSOR, Vol. i, p. 370; and the *Nouvelle Biographie*.

if I were to examine a little more diligently what had occurred to you as probable or otherwise. And I did this modestly and with a desire for searching out the truth, not for vilifying and irritating you.

Let unbiased readers judge, then, whether any fault remains with me and whether you were grateful to me. For I frankly admit that, if you had altered ever so little of it or at least had given an account of my friendly admonitions, never would I have written a word upon this subject, but, on the contrary, had you requested it, would willingly have furnished all my opinions. For my desires are elsewhere, nor have I any wish to contend with anyone on subjects, which, without prejudice to faith, can be determined either way.⁴⁹ And what I now reply, I do so under compulsion. But for the future, I shall not descend further into this controversy, but shall patiently bear whatever you pour forth upon me.

In reply to Grotius' assertion that "Certainly unless those priests who have been made for the sake of time,⁵⁰ make better criticisms than those of yours are, they could be done without," De Laet replies:

Certainly so, if they make criticisms such as yours; whether mine are such, impartial readers will judge. When I added my notes to your conjectures, I no more performed the functions of a priest than you the functions of an ambassador when you published them. Wherefore, there is no reason why one should object to my order, even if I have erred

⁴⁹ Grotius, in one place (DE LAET, *Responsio*, p. 47), claimed that De Laet's opinions were very dangerous to piety.

⁵⁰ It is difficult to understand the full significance of this phrase and the answer thereto, unless it be inferred that De Laet was a Catholic priest (or, at least, in minor orders) or a Protestant minister. None of his biographers mentions either of these possibilities. The absence of any mention of him in either HURTER's *Nomenclator* or the *Catholic Encyclopedia* seems to indicate that De Laet was not in Catholic Orders, although the fact that he had a daughter does not necessarily preclude this possibility. It seems more likely, however, he was one of those Protestants, who charged Grotius with becoming a Catholic, after the latter had published his *Via et votum ad pacem ecclesiasticum* in 1642. "You must finally show your odium against the Church from which you have departed," says De Laet to Grotius. Now it is known that an Amsterdam minister, James Laurent, published his *Grotius papizans* in 1642 and that it was continually being announced from Paris that Grotius had "gone over" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed., Vol. xi, p. 195c). It is also known that Joost van Den Vondel, the celebrated Netherland poet and friend of Grotius, openly joined the Catholic Church in 1641 (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. xv, p. 507d). It seems proper to conclude, therefore, that De Laet was a Protestant minister. This interpretation may account for FOPPENS' statement that De Laet wore a beard like the Capuchins in order to effect greater authority and also to Grotius' charge that De Laet was an envious detractor, whom a heavy beard made good. However, the evidence at hand is not conclusive.

imprudently in those notes (a thing which, nevertheless, you have not shown). Moreover, it was not sufficient that you raged against me in all your writing; you must finally show your odium against the Church from which you have departed. This is not the place to speak of this subject, nor do I claim that such diverse matters ought to be commingled. But in order that it may be clear that my notes on your first dissertation were correct, I shall briefly repeat here, in place of a conclusion, the points which have been controverted between us.

First, I denied that there was any reason why the division of the migration of the peoples to America should be determined at the Isthmus of Panama; for nothing prevented the peoples on one side from going back and forth to the other without hindrance. Here you only take exception by saying that there were mountains and narrows; which, even if it were so (a thing which, nevertheless, I deny), yet cannot prevent the going back and forth of the men on both sides.

Then you said by way of a new opinion: "I think that almost all the peoples, who are on this side of the Isthmus of Panama, originated from Norway." I showed by many arguments, not even one of which have you refuted in this second dissertation, that this was less probable, since the Mexicans (of whom you wished this especially to be believed) had come to the Mexican Lake before the Norwegians could have moved from Greenland; nay even that they had found at the Lake and in more remote regions other nations and of different origin, who had dwelled there many years before. Therefore, it is indeed clear enough that not only not "almost all the peoples, who are this side the Isthmus of Panama," but not even those whom you especially intended, the Mexicans, Chichimecs, Otomis, and others, originated from Norway.

Thereupon, you gave only this response: "Since it is agreed between us that the Greenlanders originated from Norway, at least a part of North America is considered to have been cultivated by Norwegians; and because Herrera writes that those who live next to the Bacallaos are like the Lapps in worship and other respects, even on this score it is probable." But look you, I beg, whether with these words of yours that saying of Horace does not properly square: "Amphora coepit institui" or "Parturiunt montes," etc. For when the reader was expecting something grand and unknown in previous centuries, such as in truth would be the showing of the origin of so many peoples, which inhabit the northern part of America, now at length recourse is had to the claim that the Greenlanders and the Bacallaos originated from the Norwegians and the Lapps.

Thirdly, you asserted that those who occupied Yucatan and certain neighboring places were of a different origin, namely, that they were carried thither from Ethiopia by the tossing of the ocean, "which could easily have happened to some fishermen borne away from their own shores, then snatched away by those fierce winds, which blow straight towards America," etc., and then you intended the origin to be from the

Abyssinians. To this I gave a lengthy reply, which would take too long to repeat here, but especially that the Empire of the Abyssinians never did extend to the ocean. You reply that it extended to the Congo Kingdom, which neither is true, nor, if it were, would it follow therefrom that the Empire of the Abyssinians extended to the ocean. But to make you believe the more that that Empire never extended to the ocean, I shall add here two passages from the first book of the *De Abyssinorum Rebus* of Father Nicholas Godingius, S.J.

Here De Laet quotes the passages in full and then continues:

Fourthly, there was the question about the Peruvians, whom you claimed originated from the Chinese; but this I showed to be least credible of all on account of the length and difficulty of navigation, and many other reasons. And in order that you might among other things prove the similarity of customs or at least equal industry, you alleged that the Peruvians wrote in the same way as the Chinese, that the Peruvians wrote not by means of letters, but by signs of things, and this from the top of the chart to the bottom as among the Chinese. I noted that the Peruvians had neither characters or writing nor characters after the manner of the Chinese. How little to the point you replied to this, the impartial reader shall judge.

Why more? If everything were believed which you alleged in this second dissertation, you have brought forward nothing which upsets my former *Notae*, but on the contrary you have heaped up still more fresh errors. But I make an end and pray for you a better mind and greater modesty.

So ended the controversy between Grotius and De Laet, but its echoes continued to be heard for some years after. In fact, at least two works on the same subject appeared in that same year (1644), that of Jean Baptiste Poisson at Paris⁵¹ and that of Robert Comte at Amsterdam.⁵² The latter was an academic dissertation adopting the Phoenician view, but its author was not sufficiently

⁵¹ *Joannis Baptistae Poissoni Animadversiones ad ea quae Hugo Grotius et Johannes Lahetius de Origine Gentium Peruvianarum et Mexicanarum scripserunt* (Paris, 1644). The title is given in WINSOR, Vol. i, p. 370, n. 4; and NICÉRON, pp. 344-345.

⁵² *Roberti Comtaei Nortmanni De Origine Gentium Americanarum Dissertatio* (Amstelodami, Typis Nicolai Ravesteinii, 1644). This is a work of 41 duodecimo pages and there is a copy in the Library of Congress. There are two folios (4 pp.) between the title-page and page 3, which contain a letter addressed by Nicolaus Herouart, Rothomagensis, to Johannes Six, Godefridus Wuytiers, Franciscus Reael, and Constantinus Sohiers, dated at Amsterdam, April 12, 1644. The work is listed in NICÉRON, p. 345; and WINSOR, Vol. i, p. 370, n. 4. HORN (pp. 18-19) says that Comtaeus intended to write a work weighing the arguments of Grotius and De Laet, but his untimely death prevented him.

acquainted with those aids which are so necessary for a work of this character.⁵³ De Laet himself, although he took no further personal part in the controversy, incited another to take part, and so Georg Horn, "ordinary professor of History and Civil Government in the illustrious Academy of the Gelderlandes," took up the question in a rather lengthy dissertation in 1652.⁵⁴ In his Preface, Horn says: "This little work on the origins of the Americans, which you see now after some years, I wrote at the instigation especially of Johan De Laet, after he refuted the new opinions of Hugo Grotius. From that time it has lain cast aside among my papers, since, engaged partly by a journey to England, partly by other hindrances, I had put aside all desire of publishing it." Finding time afterwards, Horn determined to publish it unchanged just as he would have published it when it was written. Horn's aim as he himself states, is "to write American history from the very origin of the race to the arrival of Europeans in America."⁵⁵ His description of America is quite complimentary. "America," he says,⁵⁶ "the fairest of lands, with vast expanses toward both Oceans, lies midway between the East and the West, and, being fertile for all kinds of fruits, exults here and there in joyful verdure." It would be impracticable here to follow his lengthy arguments point for point. Suffice it to say that his view was the Scythian one, but he held to later additions from the Phoenicians and Carthaginians on the Atlantic side and from the Chinese on the Pacific.⁵⁷

The knowledge that these writers of the seventeenth century possessed and the evidence that they adduced seem all the more remarkable, when it is remembered that "the question of the origin of the Indians is as yet a matter of conjecture. Affinities with Asiatic groups have been observed on the northwestern

⁵³ HORN, preface, p. 3.

⁵⁴ See title below, in Bibliography. There is a copy in the Library of Congress. A second edition appeared at Hemipolis (Halberstadt) in 1669. This edition did not contain a complimentary poem of three pages by Johannes Witten which appeared in the first edition after the preface. See also WINSOR, Vol. i, p. 370; and NICÉRON, p. 345.

⁵⁵ HORN, p. 1.

⁵⁶ HORN, p. 2.

⁵⁷ WINSOR, Vol. i, p. 370.

and western coast of North America, and certain similarities between the Peruvian-coast Indians and Polynesian tribes seem striking, but decisive evidence is still wanting." In these words Bandelier⁵⁸ sums up the state of affairs today, but in these words also De Laet might have summed up his own opinions on the same subject over two hundred and fifty years ago.

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⁵⁸ AD. F. BANDELIER, in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. i (New York, 1907), p. 411d, s. v. *America*.